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AUTHOR Gary, Lee P., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

It is the theme of this paper that economic prosperity and public education are inseparable; yet, both are lacking in Louisiana. The lack of excellence in education is a liability for stimulating and accelerating the growth and diversification of business and industry. In particular, educational mediocrity is evidenced in the following: (1) staggering failure rates of male and black students in the first grade; and (2) low scores of high school seniors in the American College Testing Program (ACT). Recommendations for achievement improvements in these two areas are presented. The Governor-Elect, the Louisiana Legislature, and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) must develop a team approach to ensure meaningful reform of the State's public education system. Key recommendations for improvement include the following: (1) compulsory state-funded pre-schooling for 4- and 5-year olds; (2) performance pay raises for classroom teachers; (3) funding for more textbooks and libraries; (4) privatization of the State vocational and technical schools; and (5) implementation of the already mandated exit exam for graduation from high school. Four tables of statistical data on student attrition rates and ACT scores are included. (FMW)

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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN METRO NEW ORLEANS*

Lee P. Gary, Jr. **

23 June 1988

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** Consultant -- Education Research and Economic Development

Address: 316 Henry Clay Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118

Telephone: 504/899-1264

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METRO NEW ORLEANS TOWN MEETING

PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOLUTIONS '88

OPENING REMARKS

Greetings, Ladies, Gentlemen and Special Guests. A joint Town Meeting of Jefferson and Orleans Parishes is indeed a unique event. I am honored to be a participant -- and I feel extremely privileged to be a speaker. My very special appreciation goes to Councilman Peggy Wilson of New Orleans and State Representative Quentin Dastugue of Metairie for their confidence in me to meet the challenge. Furthermore, I am comforted by the many friends I see here.

Councilman Wilson and Rep. Dastague emphasized to me that the Town Meeting is to be "action and results oriented." So my presentation will be straightforward. It will address:

"Economic Prosperity -- and the Responsibility of Public Education"

Prosperity and Education are inseparable. Yet, both are lacking in Louisiana. Public education is not without blame.... nor is it alone. Accordingly, it is long overdue for a genuine revitalization in governance, management and funding.

There are many to whom I am most grateful for what I plan to say. Accolades and platitudes are omitted for conservation of time ..... and I will spare you from fanfare and fluff. For your convenience and reference, a handout with four tables is readily available at your seat. Data in the tables will be discussed as part of my presentation.

I welcome the challenge of generating discourse for the deliberations of the first "Metro New Orleans Town Meeting," dedicated to "Public Schools" and "Solutions for '88".

So, let's move on .....

METRO NEW ORLEANS TOWN MEETING

PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOLUTIONS '88

A POINT OF VIEW

Public education at all levels in the State of Louisiana is at an abysmal, perhaps all-time, low in -

* IMAGE
* CONFIDENCE
* and PERFORMANCE.

Instead of being a prime driving force for economic prosperity, the lack of excellence in public education is a liability for stimulating and accelerating the growth and diversification of business and industry. Consequently, good job opportunities stagnate, even disappear.

Locally, the Jefferson and Orleans Public School Districts, the focus of today's Town Meeting, are languishing in student achievement. Jefferson and Orleans public schooling is more an albatross than an asset for the economic development potential of Metro New Orleans. Admittedly, non-public education is not without its brand of problems, however, the private sector has been the bulwark in providing quality schooling to keep Metro New Orleans buoyant in economic development competition.

Louisiana is near or at the bottom position of numerous national standards for assessing the quality of public education, especially at the elementary and secondary levels. Such is well known to the citizenry, thanks to the media. Regrettably, most public school officials have become quite remarkably articulate, alone or in chorus, at explaining away the value of the different standards and the corresponding ranking for Louisiana and parish school districts, simultaneously reassuring students, parents, employers and concerned citizens that "excellence in education" is more a perception than a measurement. Meanwhile, mediocrity prevails ..... and, sadly, becomes the norm.

Two big examples of mediocrity, which must be removed from Louisiana, are presented for your consideration. They are:

(1) Staggering failure rates of male and black students in the first grade of public education; and

(2) Embarassing scores of public high school seniors for the American College Testing Program.

Yes, I do acknowledge to you, there are some examples of excellence, success, if you so prefer, in a few public schools of Louisiana. However, excellence is the rare exception! Too many students are failing, with their adulthoods in jeopardy, that no person, regardless of his/her preference for public, private or parochial schooling, should ever be satisfied with just isolated exemplary programs for a few, while the majority of students languish in inferior public schools.

Public education in Louisiana suffers from excessive self-delusion by state and local school board members. The prevailing ill-mindset is that the overall quality of education can be left unspoken or omitted in selected, preferential economic development competition ..... if the prospect, investor or suitor does not mention, inquire or emphasize the subject. Nothing could be further from reality in economic development! A case in point, certainly not raised for exacerbating a recent mortal wound, is a comparison of student performance on the American College Testing Program (ACT) for the following final competitors in the economic development race to be a site for construction of the new space station:

Alabama vs. Louisiana

and

Huntsville vs. New Orleans

The comparison is based on the ACT composite score of college-bound, high school seniors for the last five years of testing.

Admittedly, ACT senior scores were not used as a standard of evaluation for the proposals submitted by Boeing Corporation and Martin Marietta Corporation to NASA for building a section of the Nation's long-awaited space station. However, the quite vast differential in ACT scores confirms that New Orleans would not be even on the same playing field as Huntsville if standardized test scores are used to assess the overall quality of schooling when comparing the two cities. Please check Tables III and IV of the handout (see Attachments) for a grim, quantitative comparison using ACT test scores.

To continue my talk, I will take a closer look at the role of public education in economic development -- and the nature and scope of education reform in Louisiana. My talk will feature two sets of recommendations to restore "lost excellence" in Louisiana public education, plus specific recommendations for early and secondary schooling. Emphasis will be on the responsibility of the Governor-Elect, Legislature, State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and local school boards. The prime beneficiaries of the recommendations are the students and school teachers. In brief, the recommendations to be given to the Town Meeting stress collectively:

- Compulsory Pre-Schooling for 4 and 5- Year Olds
- Performance Pay Raises for Classroom Teachers
- Funding for More Textbooks and Libraries
- Privatization of the State VoTech Schools
- Exit Exam for Graduation from Public High School

Also, the pivotal role of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in the restoration of excellence cannot ..... must not ..... be ignored. Although the paramount duty of BESE is to appoint the next State Superintendent of Education in 1988, six unresolved issues facing BESE are respectfully included for appropriate consideration by the Town Meeting.

Let's now move to a deeper look at student failure in the first grade and standardized test scores for graduating seniors in public education.

STUDENT FAILURE IN THE FIRST GRADE OF LOUISIANA PUBLIC EDUCATION*

THE FACTS

An analysis of student failure in the first grade of the Louisiana public schools reveals an average attrition rate of 16.93% for the school years of 1983-1984 to 1985-1986. To wit:

First Grade Enrollment	73,908
Student Failures	12,514
Attrition Rate	16.93%

In general, the failure trends for first grade are:

- Failure rate of males exceeds females -- 19.66% vs. 13.90%

- Failure rate of Blacks exceeds Whites -- 22.42% vs. 12.17%

- Black males are most at-risk with an attrition rate of 25.72% followed by

Black Females	18.99%
White Males	13.70%
White Females	9.52%

Please consult (see Attachments) the handout at your seat for "Comparison of Attrition Rates for White and Black Students in First Grade." Table I addresses the public school districts of New Orleans and the River Region, and Table II highlights the other major public school districts of Louisiana.

*See: "Student Attrition in the First Grade of the Public School Districts Serving New Orleans and the River Region," Lee P. Gary, Jr., December 7, 1987.

STUDENT FAILURE IN THE FIRST GRADE
ABATEMENT PLAN

Male and black students are struggling with quite serious, dangerous academic hardship. In particular, black students are suffering from a severe and persistent attrition trend that is reducing dramatically their long-term achievement -- even their survival -- in education. Future underclass status, due to academic failure and dropping out, is too much a reality for blacks in their first year of elementary public education.

Abatement of the pace-setting attrition rate of black males is urgent. Reversing the trend is likewise necessary to improve the future success and meaningful status of black males in the mainstream of society. Recent reports have sounded many alarms about the loss of black males in secondary schools and higher education. Yet, the intrinsic onset of decline, as new research reveals, really begins in first grade. For too many students the odds of a first-year washout are increased due to the lack of proper preschooling. Forget later dropout prevention programs!

Academic achievement must be improved for all students in their first year. Survival decreases with unforgiving odds for marginal students who exit first grade. Dropping out becomes inevitable, and programs to save dropouts are belated -- and serve more as a social crutch than academic remediation.

Completion of kindergarten is not required in Louisiana. However, to enroll in first grade, a student must either pass a readiness examination or have attended an approved kindergarten for one school year. Ironically, public prekindergarten is not required!

Overall reduction of student attrition in first grade is a prerequisite for the long-term improvement of public education in Louisiana. Failure is extensive and alarming!

The reduction must be based on steadily improving student achievement--and raising, not lowering, standards for promotion. Otherwise, ill-prepared and marginal students who leave first grade are hopelessly doomed to fail -- and ultimately become a secondary, if not sooner, dropout.

Preschooling is the best insurance for success in first grade. Mandatory full day kindergarten for 5-year olds and half day prekindergarten for 4-year olds are imperative. The size of first grade classes should be limited to no more than 20 students per teacher and kindergarten and prekindergarten classes to 15 students. State funds for kindergarten and prekindergarten, plus enhancement of first grade, can be obtained by repealing every exemption to the state sales tax and designating the new revenues for preschooling and first-grade programs. Immediate funding is then possible. It's Fish or Cut Bait Time for Education!!

In addition to mandatory preschooling programs funded by the state, improving the academic value of first grade calls for the following actions at the local level:

(1) Placing the best available teachers, the best of the most qualified, in preschool and first grade classes and rewarding them with multi-year performance contracts, including a major financial bonus for accepting an assignment in schools with historically high attrition rates;
(2) Recruiting more male teachers for preschool and first grade classes, especially black males for urban schools, using a supplemental hiring bonus and extra stipends to ensure long-term employment;
(3) Establishing a pool of teacher aides at each school site to assist first grade and kindergarten/prekindergarten teachers with their classroom activities; and
(4) Expanding information programs and counseling to help parents handle better the difficult transition of their children from home to school, plus helping their children with homework.

Admittedly, the four recommendations delineated are not all-inclusive. Improving the first grade experience of public school education also requires a concommitant upgrading of instructional materials; textbooks; training, certification and evaluation of teachers and principals; and reliable student testing. Each is the responsibility of the state.

TEST SCORES OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ON THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM *

THE FACTS

Participation by the Jefferson and Orleans Public School Districts in the national standardized testing programs for high school seniors, such as the American College Testing Program and the College Board Admissions Testing Program, readily provides the good opportunity to compare the academic preparation of the respective graduating classes. In turn, the past results of the two testing programs can be used to reflect on the literacy and competency of the seniors as adults for entering the mainstream of society. Please turn to Tables III and IV of the handout.

Based on the annual results of the American College Testing Program, traditionally called the ACT, a comparison of the past five graduating classes of the Jefferson and Orleans, including St. Charles and St. Tammany, Public School Districts reveals, as listed in Table III of the handout:

(a) For the five-year period of 1981-1982 to 1985-1986, ACT composite scores of Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles and St. Tammany are below the national average;

(b) For the five-year period of 1981-1982 to 1985-1986, ACT composite test scores of Orleans are below the statewide average and St. Tammany are above the statewide average, whereas Jefferson is below or tied twice the statewide average and St. Charles is above except for 1981-1982;

(c) In 1985-1986, the composite score of St. Tammany exceeded, albeit slightly, the national average for the first time and likewise, the statewide average.

*See: "Academic Preparation of the Graduating Seniors of Jefferson, Orleans and St. Tammany Public School Districts," Lee P. Gary, Jr., July 11, 1987.

Overall, from 1981-1982 to 1985-1986, the composite scores of the graduating classes of the New Orleans Public Schools are consistently the lowest compared with their counterparts of the Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Tammany Public Schools.

The ACT scores for English and Mathematics, listed in Table IV, are quite revealing. They sadly reveal that the New Orleans Public Schools continue to lag behind -- and seniors languish with inferior preparation in English and Mathematics.

Some seniors of the Jefferson and Orleans Public Schools take the Scholastic Aptitude Test of the College Board Admissions Testing Program, traditionally called SAT. Historically, the SAT scores are preferred by private colleges and universities. SAT scores are favorable for the graduating classes of the Jefferson and Orleans Public Schools. However, less than 10% of the annual graduating seniors sit for the Scholastic Aptitude Test in Verbal and Mathematics, and this skews an assessment of their true value.

Regrettably, too many students who attend public school in New Orleans are ill-prepared for success, if any, in their future collegiate study. After twelve long years of schooling, if the student doesn't drop out, preparation is mediocre, as evidenced in Tables III and IV. Only the truly gifted, who are very few in number, survive with academic excellence. Typical graduates are without the requisite, basic literacy and competency, as judged by ACT scores, to survive on equal footing in the mainstream of society. A rewarding, meaningful adulthood is in jeopardy.

In short, the New Orleans Public Schools are a factory for the institutionalization of the underclass of the Crescent City. Change seems quite impossible. Numerous organizations have long tried, are still trying, yet the trend of mediocrity continues. Money alone is not the explanation -- or fool-proof remedy -- for the inferior quality of the graduates. Prime causes are rooted in a lingering, latent disregard and indifference, which permeate the school system, for the value of a sound high school diploma as the cornerstone of adult life.

UPGRADING SECONDARY EDUCATION

Improving the quality of schooling in Jefferson and Orleans has kept the citizenry weary -- and wary of the endless rhetoric. Better schooling is imperative to ensure the economic future and long-term growth of Metro New Orleans to live well, find work and prosper. Such is the purpose of the Town Meeting.

The basic components available to help reinvigorate economic development of Metro New Orleans are well recognized. Among them are the Port, Michoud Assembly Facility and Exhibition Hall, plus the tourism and energy businesses. Unquestionably, the Number I known missing ingredient to bolster regional economic development potential is superior public schooling. In particular, the most adverse component is the Orleans Parish Public School District, which as such weakens the heart of the metropolitan area. Also, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Tammany are, admittedly, not without limitations.

The upgrading of secondary public schooling, as suggested by this review of standardized test scores, has been urged by a long neglected legion of recommendations by various organizations, public and private, some prepared at the cost of the taxpayer.

Recommendations for upgrading the effectiveness of public secondary schooling are submitted as follows to the Town Meeting:

(1) Use an academic exam with a meaningful score to determine the eligibility of a student to enter and to graduate from a public high school;
(2) Use independently standardized tests to determine whether a student has passed or failed a given course, reducing the probability of social promotion;
(3) Upgrade the contents and passing standards of high school courses, especially electives, and strengthened compliance by teachers;
(4) Enhance classroom instruction with more laboratory classes to build research and applied skills;

(5) Increase homework and outside assignments associated with each course, including more term papers to expand writing and library skills;
(6) Provide more courses with advanced placement to expand preparation for collegiate study.

Admittedly, these recommendations are not brand-new. Each is well known -- and enjoys a successful track record nationally. Regrettably, they are absent or available in limited degree only in the Jefferson and Orleans Public School Districts. Complete, immediate implementation of the recommendations is long overdue for better secondary public education to strengthen the academic preparation of high school graduates entering the mainstream of society in Louisiana -- and Metro New Orleans.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Education, more than any other function of government, is today's fulcrum for economic prosperity. Education is more than a government service: it is an investment in human potential. Equity and access must guide the investment.

In evaluating the economic development capacity of a state or community, chief executives still give due consideration to such traditional factors as access to markets, availability of natural resources, transportation, cost of labor and special tax advantages. However, greater emphasis is placed today, more than ever, on the success of public education. Unspoken emphasis is placed likewise on the integrity of government. Such emphasis is analytical and rigorous! Highly prized and favorably weighted is a full spectrum of quality educational opportunities from pre-kindergarten to post-doctoral. An invaluable, new dimension on the post-secondary level is the entrepreneurial capacity of the surrounding colleges and universities. Yet, the pivotal step of the corporate decision-making process is, undeniably, the success of public elementary/secondary education available in the state and community where the investment will be made.

The quality of public elementary and secondary education is the critical factor in the economic well-being and future of any state or community because it is a measure of the literacy and competency of high school graduates entering the mainstream of society. Moreover, it is a gauge of the due care and willingness of the Legislature and Governor to invest in the human potential of the children of their state.

NON-COMPETITIVENESS OF LOUISIANA IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nationwide, chief executives often consider Louisiana to invest (or reinvest) the growing financial resources of their companies. But, when research and analysis appear to be moving positively for selecting Louisiana, the mediocrity of public elementary and secondary education soon becomes the paramount stumbling block. Usually, it is insurmountable -- spelling the deathknell of Louisiana in final competition. One bad result: Growth remains sluggish at best and diversification of the industrial base is thwarted.

Ironically, the Louisiana Legislature has done a commendable job keeping pace with the leading reform states in passing laws to improve public education. The many new laws look great in the statutes! Regrettably, law-making has not been well-coordinated, driven mostly by special interest groups, and most programs are enacted with inadequate or no funding.

Historically, education in Louisiana has received more near numbing rhetoric than any other major public issue. Although "education" is everybody's perennial priority, it has been used primarily as a commodity for partisan politics. As a result, new money for education has been a highly sought after commodity for political patronage at all levels of government -- not a real priority for the people ..... much less the students.

HARSH LACK OF EDUCATION REFORM IN LOUISIANA

Meaningful reform of public education in Louisiana, designed to restore excellence, is embarrassingly overdue. Admittedly, this fact is not new. What has been and remains missing for real action is true conviction and resolve through the leadership of the Governor and Legislature. But, now, there are good winds of change in the State Capitol. Admittedly, reform is hampered by the on-going financial crisis of Louisiana. First and foremost, a fiscally sound state government is the prerequisite for a long lasting, continuous advancement of public education at every level. Unquestionably, this should be the concern of the new Governor and Legislature. Fiscal stability is a must!

Concomitant with balancing the state budget, present tax revenues must be shifted to fund properly public education. Ill procrastination is over, and the Governor and Legislature cannot avoid immediate reallocation. In future fiscal years, the lion's share of all new tax revenues should be reserved for education to ensure the fiscal continuity and orderliness needed to implement and sustain reform. Let's start by removing every exemption to the state sales tax -- and designating the revenues for renewing excellence in education.

WINDS OF CHANGE

Smoldering dissatisfaction of the voters -- and some early warning signals from the new Governor-Elect -- are beginning now to combine in order to question

- political patronage, plus
- polarization, doubt, inertia and lost hope

in public education to plan and unleash meaningful reform, not just statutory paperwork and unfunded commitments.

The winds are a good omen ..... but change for the good is not yet definite, much less underway. Participants of the Town Meeting must prepare for action.

STARTING THE MECHANISM OF EDUCATION REFORM

Reform of public education in Louisiana is dependent on the teamwork of three components of state government:

- Governor
- Legislature
- BESE (and Superintendent)

Each entity is unique, yet politically interdependent, but constitutionally separate. Regrettably, the high office of the Governor, the State Legislature and BESE have not worked in full harmony for a long, self-defeating time. Victims of the siege have been the students -- not the politicians. Likewise, the prosperity of Louisiana has been compromised.

Reform for excellence works this way, based on studies of other successful states, such as Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas:

* Governor: Sets priorities and statewide blueprint for excellence in education

* Legislature: Enacts statutes for equity, obligation of the state, and fiscal commitment

* BESE: Implements the statutes (laws and fiscal) through rulemaking to ensure equal participation, compliance and periodic evaluation of use of public funds

As you well know, this constitutional partnership is not even functioning poorly. It is non-existent! Let's take a closer, rigorous look at the role and responsibility of BESE.

BESE AND ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVITALIZING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Among the many challenges facing BESE is the all-important appointment in 1988 of the next and new State Superintendent of Education. Heretofore, this office was filled by a statewide election. An act of the Louisiana Legislature in 1985 (Act 444) vested BESE with the authority of appointment, and a new adjunct law (Act 857) mandated Senate confirmation of the appointee.

APPOINTMENT OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Composed of 11 members, eight elected from single member districts and three appointed by the Govenor, the BESE is duly empowered to recruit, screen, and hire the best individual to fill the position of State Superintendent, who manages the State Department of Education and implements the policies of BESE. As the chief state public school officer, the State Superintendent is the pivotal position for unshackling education reform to upgrade all kindergarten, elementary, secondary and vocational-technical schooling. This challenge calls for a superb executive leader, who faces a Herculean task, possessing political savvy and enviable wherewithal.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES:
STATE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

In addition to the paramount responsibility of appointing the next State Superintendent of Education in 1988, several major unresolved issues, lingering and unavoidable, facing BESE are:

(1) Better oversight of the interest income (8g money) from the Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund, established by constitutional amendment in 1986. BESE has responsibility for $11.0 million parceled out in 1986 and $16.0 million distributed in 1987. Approximately $6.0 million remains unallocated -- or unexpended. Why? Concern is growing that 8g money is spread among too many projects to be effective in starting meaningful improvements. More specificity is needed to target the greatest problems of the public schools -- and avoid a new grab bag for political patronage, a hallmark of Louisiana.

(2) Safeguard the new high school graduation standards and core course requirements adopted in 1984. Several BESE members have expressed an interest in changing the tougher requirements, in particular, the Algebra courses, and adopting multi-curricula for college prep, vocational and general studies. Different state diplomas, replacing the single diploma now in existence, would be awarded to confirm a student's program of study. Surrounding this issue is the deep concern of minority leaders that a student will be branded academically and unable to shift from one study track to another without the stigma of labelling.

(3) Upgrading the standards for certification of teachers and administrators and strengthening the evaluation of all school personnel. Central to the issue of certification is increasing public interest in testing tenured teachers and tieing together continued employment and periodic recertification. In parallel, the co-issue of evaluation is increasingly viewed as linking salary and performance through a new merit or career ladder pay plan. Both draw the ire of teacher organizations, but they warm

the financial heart of taxpayers who want to see a measurable increase in student achievement for investing any new tax dollars in public schools. Continued use of the NTE (National Teacher Examination), also quite disliked by teacher organizations, is staunchly defended by business associations as a prime standard for the certification of new teachers -- and should likewise be supported by the members of the Town Meeting.

(4) Implementing the long-awaited exit exam for graduation from a public high school, mandated by the BESE in 1984, but not yet in place. To have been required of the junior class of 1986-87, the exam is still being developed and has been delayed in part by a lack of adequate funding and political procrastination. Twenty-one states now require the passing of a minimum competency test for graduation from a public high school. Why not Louisiana?

(5) Redesigning the patched up State Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) and corresponding formula for distributing state money to public school districts. Without BESE leadership, as provided by the State Constitution, this annual issue could go on forever. Prime concern here is to redirect more of each tax dollar to the classroom, not administration. Some critics claim that the MFP is so entangled that it is the "Financial Gordian Knot" impeding school reform in Louisiana. A recently passed constitutional amendment is no guarantee the MFP will be improved -- and BESE will still have to be pushed for action.

(6) Taking a leadership role in protecting public education from posible legislation in 1988 to require school boards to enter into collective bargaining agreements and binding arbitration. Such legislation could arise because of smoldering unrest within the education community due to growing disatisfaction with pay that keeps falling further behind the national average, plus shrinking fringe benefits. Beware of unionization!

IMMEDIATE EDUCATION PRIORITIES FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT

In my opening remarks, I forewarned you that I, like many of you, have a proposal for shoring-up public education. Here it is for discussion by the Town Meeting:

To set the stage for restoration of excellence in Louisiana public education, the immediate priorities of the Governor-Elect ought to be --

I. Stop and phase out remedial courses for freshmen in state colleges and universities -- and shift the corresponding funds to preschooling and start full-day prekindergarten for all 4-year olds in poverty families and then expand to cover all 4-year olds.
Estimated Shift: $25.0 million annually to preschooling

II. Mandatory attendence in kindergarten for all 5-year olds -- and student must remain in full-day kindergarten until academically ready for first grade study and not just socially admitted to public school because of age.
Estimated Cost: $20.0 million annually when implemented

III. Seek legislation and corresponding funding to guarantee a four-year performance pay package for classroom teachers only, raising all salaries 10% across the board the first year, and then up to 10% per year for the next three years with a satisfactory annual evaluation, plus all teachers must shift to a renewable teaching certificate and extend the aquisition of tenure from 3 to 6 years.
Estimated Cost: $225 million annually when implemented

IV. Seek legislation and corresponding funding to triple the current funding of textbooks and library materials for grades prekindergarten to twelve, as called for in the Louisiana Constitution.
Estimated Cost: $60 million annually when implemented

V. Seek new legislation to authorize the privitization of state postsecondary vo tech schools -- using a long-term, ironclad management contract to transfer the operation of the 50-plus schools from government to a private sector company with an incentive contract based on student performance. Moreover, all underutilized vo tech schools should be converted to: minimum security prisons; or adult education centers for GED programs; or free incubators for new business ventures, thus maximizing the return on past public tax dollars invested in physical facilities and equipment.
Estimated Savings: $5-8 million when implemented

VI. Strengthen the governance of higher education -- vesting the State Board of Regents (and renaming it the State Board of Higher Education) with the full authority to: hire/fire all public college and university presidents; set the spending limits for the capital and operating budgets of all public institutions; and liquidate public universities or convert them to 2-year community colleges.
Estimated Savings: $2 million in administration

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you very much for listening. Actually, little if any of what I have said is new, unique or even novel. Restoring the excellence in public education -- and making Louisiana competitive again -- will demand resourcefulness and wherewithal beaucoup.

The steps to improving public education are well-known, but not implemented in Louisiana ..... likewise for the Jefferson and Orleans Parish School Districts. The intangibles are: teamwork and sacrifice. Very difficult times remain ahead for Louisiana and Metro New Orleans without better public education, especially at the elementary and secondary levels.

The Governor-Elect and next Louisiana Legislature must set the leadership pace for the restoration of excellence in public education. Moreover, school officials, to earn the steady support of all taxpayers, must accept nothing less than the absolute best possible effort from every student, teacher, staff member and each administrator -- and, above all, themselves. Otherwise, reform of public education will remain rhetorical -- and economic prosperity is squandered.

Godspeed with your deliberations for the Town Meeting.

METRO NEW ORLEANS TOWN MEETING

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF ATTRITION RATES FOR WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS IN FIRST GRADE
PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF NEW ORLEANS AND THE RIVER REGION
THREE-YEAR AVERAGES FOR 1983-1984 THROUGH 1985-1986 SCHOOL YEARS*

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALL STUDENTS	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS	WHITE STUDENTS	WHITE MALES	WHITE FEMALES	BLACK STUDENTS	BLACK MALES	BLACK FEMALES
JEFFERSON	16.91	19.74	13.74	12.38	15.05	9.37	24.85	28.07	21.27
ORLEANS	20.30	24.14	16.00	11.01	13.08	8.43	21.43	25.64	16.77
PLAQUEMINES	21.81	24.55	18.75	20.24	23.20	17.09	23.86	25.81	21.69
ST. BERNARD	12.88	15.88	9.14	11.80	14.21	9.39	22.03	30.00	13.79
ST. CHARLES	9.05	11.04	6.89	5.96	8.25	4.44	14.35	17.95	10.83
ST. JAMES	15.28	17.70	12.62	8.00	10.61	6.78	18.36	20.75	14.97
ST. JOHN	18.49	22.93	13.80	12.30	17.60	6.72	23.00	26.88	18.86
ST. TAMMANY	21.31	24.05	18.21	18.17	21.17	14.85	34.36	36.80	31.80
LOUISIANA	16.93	19.66	13.90	12.17	13.70	9.52	22.42	25.72	18.99

*Source: Louisiana State Department of Education

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TABLE II

COMPARISON OF ATTRITION RATES FOR WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS IN FIRST GRADE OF THE MAJOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF LOUISIANA BASED ON THREE-YEAR AVERAGES FOR 1983-1984 THROUGH 1985-1986 SCHOOL YEARS*

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALL STUDENTS	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS	WHITE STUDENTS	WHITE MALES	WHITE FEMALES	BLACK STUDENTS	BLACK MALES	BLACK FEMALES
CADDO	19.34	21.60	16.90	10.94	13.07	8.54	25.02	27.52	22.23
CALCASIEU	15.78	18.08	13.22	13.74	15.45	11.54	20.42	24.09	16.37
EAST BR	15.86	18.31	13.11	9.35	11.42	6.92	20.88	23.95	17.58
LAFAYETTE	16.68	17.81	14.38	11.22	13.24	9.09	27.22	26.29	24.56
MONROE	14.53	17.21	11.72	7.73	10.43	4.76	16.22	18.93	13.36
RAPIDES	16.52	19.87	12.88	13.38	16.17	10.04	20.73	25.41	16.28
LOUISIANA	16.93	19.66	13.90	12.17	13.70	9.52	22.42	25.72	18.99

*Source: Louisiana State Department of Education

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TABLE III

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM
COMPARISON OF COMPOSITE SCORES FROM 1981-1982 TO 1985-1986 FOR ACT PROGRAM*

COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

SCHOOL YEAR	JEFFERSON	ORLEANS	ST. CHARLES	ST. TAMMANY	LOUISIANA	ALABAMA	HUNTSVILLE	NATION
1981-1982	16.6	12.9	16.4	17.8	16.7	17.2	19.5	18.4
1982-1983	16.2	12.8	16.4	17.8	16.2	17.2	19.5	18.3
1983-1984	16.2	13.2	17.2	18.1	16.6	17.4	19.7	18.5
1984-1985	15.4	12.7	16.9	18.4	16.5	17.6	19.9	18.6
1985-1986	16.2	13.4	17.6	18.9	16.9	18.2	20.6	18.8

*Sources: Louisiana - State Department of Education and Parish School Boards

Alabama - Annual Reports, Huntsville City Schools, Huntsville, Alabama

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TABLE IV

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM
COMPARISON OF ASSESSMENT SCORES FOR 1985-1986 ACT PROGRAM*

COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

ASSESSMENT	JEFFERSON	ORLEANS	ST. CHARLES	ST. TAMMANY	LOUISIANA	ALABAMA	HUNTSVILLE	NATION
English	16.4	14.1	17.9	18.7	17.6	18.7	20.2	18.5
Mathematics	14.4	11.1	15.9	17.5	14.9	16.2	19.8	17.3
Social Studies	14.7	11.9	16.2	17.4	15.3	17.1	19.4	17.6
Natural Sciences	18.8	16.1	19.8	21.5	19.2	20.2	22.5	21.4
Composite	16.2	13.4	17.6	18.9	16.9	18.2	20.6	18.8
Number	1,051	1,769	240	927	28,031	21,765	1,237	729,606

*Sources: Louisiana - State Department of Education and Parish School Boards

Alabama - "Annual Report: 1985-1986," Huntsville City Schools, Huntsville, Alabama